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fined to their homes. A man who does not frequently mix with his fellow men outside the house is branded as the 'man of the oven', while a woman who continually leaves her house is called 'strayer'. Men meet for their spontaneous gathering and gossip outside the house, while women meet inside. While women are expected to adorn themselves with earrings, nose rings, kohl for the eyes, finger rings, anklets, henna for the palms (almost an ornament for every sense), men are supposed to refrain. Moreover while men shave or cut their hair, women leave it to grow as long as possible and never cut it.[1] While men wear pants, women do not; while women's speech is usually sprinkled with words in the diminutive, men are not expected to follow this habit; while women carry things on their heads, men never do so, and only carry things either in the hands, or on the back or shoulders. On walking along the village streets and alleyways, women keep near the wall, while men walk in the middle of the street. Although both men and women are fond of dramatizing their speech, yet they have different stylized ways of doing this. While men use their index fingers as a sign of threatening, women point out with their middle finger. Women grasp their chin or slap their face with open palms for surprise or regret or shame, while men slowly clap their hands. On being angry or hurt, the woman's cry is 'Abouh, abouh . . .' and in joy her shrill cry is 'Wri, ri, ri . . .'. Men are not supposed to utter any cries of joy or anger. In threatening a man will threaten in default to cut off his moustache, while a woman threatens to cut off her head hair. Men and women use different invectives and imprecations as well as different greetings. Women in their speech draw out their words, whereas men end them abruptly. Women do not participate either in individual or communal worship in the mosque as they are excluded altogether from it, but there is no Koranic support for this. On the other hand, they are usually the performers of magico-religious rituals connected with averting the evil eye, bringing about pregnancy, or healing the sick; and men are less engaged in this sphere. It is also interesting to note that, as in Classical Arabic, the dialect of the village attached the feminine 'n' at the end of the verb in the third person feminine plural, a feature which does not occur in most of the urban dialects in Egypt.

Between men and women there is complete avoidance in looking at each other face to face, except in the case of certain kinships specified by the Koran. On meeting men in the street, women have always to turn their heads to one side, and pull their head covering across their face, and men are expected to lower their heads and not stare at women. The sex taboo on looking and talking without reserve does not apply to children till they reach the adolescent stage, when they gradually acquire such norms and begin to observe them as a part of their value system of politeness. On the other hand, very old women and men are freed from such restric-

[1] See Appendix VIII, for a boy who said that he would be ashamed if his hair grew long, presumably because it looks like that of girls.

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It is not without significance that in ceremonies of circumcision and marriage, the boy and the man have to visit the mosque in a ceremonial way where dates and food are distributed. In praise of marriage, a villager would quote the Prophet's saying, 'He who marries has perfected half his religious requirements, and he has only to fear God in the other half'. It is also worth stating that the majority of the personal names of both sexes have some religious meaning or are the names of some religious personalities.

The importance of sacredness not only permeates those levels, justifying acts and deeds, but also reaches the substance of living, namely, foodstuffs and bread, usually referred to as the 'sustenance of Islam' and which are considered to be sacred. A good harvest is a sign of God's approval; a torrent of rain which destroys the villagers' crops is a sign of His disapproval. To impart holiness to the land before sowing, or to the harvest before threshing, a sacrifice of an animal and the partaking of a communal meal are desirable acts. According to the enlightened religious view, the villagers do not distinguish between pagan and the proper Islamic concepts. The village schoolmaster said that the belief in the power of saints, sorcery, and magic, and the appeal to divination and ritual for healing the sick as practised in the village, are complexly interwoven with Islamic beliefs, but they are not in fact a part of the pure Faith.[1] It is believed that sickness might be inflicted by a saint for not fulfilling a vow taken in his name, or for not offering him his due customary gift and sacrifice. A great deal of treatment of disease and of acquiring of good luck could be achieved by prayers, sacred charms, and propitiation of saints. The strength of the religious force could be also ascertained from the fact that the most binding guarantee for a promise is to swear by the name of Allah or to read the Fatiha. It is also customary for the villagers to take an oath sacrifice for God or a saint, which is a kind of conditional oath involving the slaying of an animal on the fulfilment of a certain task and the attendant danger that may ensue in the event of perjury

The certainty and uniformity in religious beliefs and rituals specially noted in the observance of the fasting month, is an index of the religious group cohesiveness. All the villagers belong to the Maliki school of the Sunni tradition. Most of the adult villagers attend the Friday noon prayers, and say their regular daily prayers either at home or in the mosque. There is a well-known Islamic tradition believed by the villagers that group prayers are more efficacious and rewarding than those said alone.

It is no exaggeration to say that the folk culture of the village is permeated by religious sanctions and moral values derived from the Islamic traditions as revealed in the Koran and also infused with rituals and beliefs of an older tradition. It is not difficult to assert that there is hardly

[1] See John Walker, *Folk Medicine in Modern Egypt*, London, 1934. Sir E. A. Wallis Budge, *Amulets and Superstitions*, London, 1930.

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858 to those of the adults, he is debarred from adult circles, and adult activities; and grown-ups do not expect their children to express any opinion on matters which are outside their domain. Although they are expected to orientate themselves to the same sphere of life, children are not given any significant role in the social life of the village, apart from their economic role. Until the age of twelve the children are not expected to go to the mosque to say their prayers, and if they go they are allowed to sit in the back row only, and never in the front or the middle. Women and girls, however, do not go to the mosque at all in Silwa, and are not expected to do so. There is no religious sanction for this, however; Islam has enjoined mosque prayers on both sexes. Compared with the Tale child, the social sphere of the Silwa child is more restricted in many respects. In the former society, the social sphere of adults and children is differentiated only in terms of relative capacity. 'Nothing in the universe of adult behaviour is hidden from children, or barred to them. They are actively and responsibly part of the social structure, of the economic system, the ritual and ideological system.'[1] In Silwa, however, although children may know about the happenings and events of the adult world in the social sphere, they are not expected to take an active part, or to show interest in them, unless they are asked to do so. On some occasions the writer heard children who, on enquiring about the guests coming to the house, or the nature of the gifts taken to relatives, or where father was going, were silenced and asked to 'mind their own business'.

828 Moreover, the process of 'growing-up' is believed to be affected by the character traits of the parents and close relatives on both the patrilineal and matrilineal side.[2] The belief is that the virtues and vices of the parents and their family line are transmitted, through heredity, to their offspring. Especially in the case of outstanding physical features or social characteristics, their presence is invariably accounted for by inheritance from ancestors; if not directly inherited from the parents, they could be traced to the grandfather or to the great-grandfather. Trends of character, whether of meanness, hospitality, piety, wickedness, aggression or docility, seem to run in the families. A person who deviates from what is known about his family is referred to as 'a mistake' or 'a slip', whether in praise or blame depending on the context. One hears sayings and phrases to the effect that 'so-and-so by nature is good or bad'; 'his roots are rotten'; 'nature prevails over nurture (attaba yaghlib attatbu)'; 'people are of different metals; those who were good in the pre-Islamic period, will be equally good in Islam (annas maadin), Khiyaruhum fi al-Jahiliya, khiyaruhum fi al-Islam'.

861 It must be pointed out here that the process of socialization which is strongly felt during childhood and adolescence is not only conducted through the agency of the family, both conjugal and extended, but also

[1] M. Fortes, *Social and Psychological Aspects of Education in Taleland*, p. 9.
[2] See Chapter IV, concerning the child's character traits.

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Wana jayi mna al Mas'aeed,
wi labis talat jalalaleeb,
wi batgallab baihin gilleeb.
Chorus: Gol la abouy in kunt tahwani, gol la abouy.

I was coming from al Masaeed (a neighbouring village)
wearing three garments
in which I was rolling, rolling.
Chorus: Tell my father if you love me, tell my father.

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At this stage of adolescence, boys—especially those who have been to the Kuttab—begin to participate in mosque prayers and show intensified interest in religious practices. They go to Friday prayers, take part in the calling for prayers and the drawing of water from the mosque well for ablutions. A great number of youths also join the mystic order of 'Nakshabandia'; they are called 'Boys of the Path' (awlad attarik), and their headquarters is a room attached to the old mosque of the village. Members of the sect are expected to attend the night prayers ('isha) in the mosque, after which they congregate for reading and listening to mystic verses, followed by telling some of God's attributes silently several times. This is called 'the mystic routine' (ratib). Moreover, on certain occasions, these youths perform collectively the 'Zikr'. The performance of this mystic ritual involves mainly the repetitive uttering of some of God's attributes aloud and in unison. The leader of the 'Zikr', a blind man, stands in the middle of a circle, while youths, and sometimes with them a few married men, will be standing in a circle calling out together one of God's names, e.g. 'Merciful' (Raheem), while swaying their bodies. This repetition may go on for about a quarter of an hour or so, to be stopped by the leader who will recite some verses of saints or some 'mawwals'. While the boys are listening to this, they express their approval and admiration, and they may ask for another 'mawwal' from the reciter before they start chanting another of God's names. While those in the circle are repeatedly chanting a name of God, gradually getting into almost a state of ecstasy, the leader in the centre would be clapping his hands and stimulating his boys to carry on by more repetitive chanting. The following are two examples of 'mawwals' sung on such occasions:

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'Ajaby 'ala welaid fi zikr al-Ilah zawwad,
elif al-Jalalah, wib salaat annabi t'awwad.
'Ash gadr ma'ash la mal wa la hawwad,
wa la umru jalas yoam ma'ally galbahum sawwad,
lamma mat bayyan karamat la 'affan wa la dawwad.

I admire the boy who has indulged in mentioning God's name,
and accustomed himself to His Glorious name and to prayers for the Prophet,

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and lived all his time never deviating from the right path,
and never associating with those people whose hearts have been blackened.
When he died he showed signs of piety, and his body neither decayed, nor was attacked by worms.

. . . . .

Shams al giyama danat gum ya mureed safir,
gum jahhiz azzad min gabl al-miaad safir,
wi gabbad al-arwah daiman al-'ibad safir,
as-shaib wiyya as-sigam ju lak ya fata mursal.
wi likul umnah ata liha nabi mursal,
ata Jibril bil burag li annabi mursal.

The sun of resurrection is approaching, a warning for departure.
Prepare yourself before the hour comes.
The seizer of souls is always apparent and about.
Grey hairs and sickness are messengers for you.
For every nation there has been a messenger,
and Gabriel delivered God's message to Muhammad.

On some occasions these 'Boys of the Path' go to visit their 'brothers' in another village. On their approaching that village, the heralding of which would be by the visitors' chanting in unison popular verses and by beating on a small drum, the latter would walk out to receive them before they enter the village. They would offer them tea and dates and spend the rest of the night reciting verses or holding a 'zikr'.

Some of the adolescents and youths in the village do not take part in either the singing or mystic activities, for they are not encouraged to do so by their parents, and they are satisfied by only gathering in the neighbourhood for chatting. On asking some of these boys why they did not join in such activities, they replied that they wanted to attend to their livelihood, and as they usually felt tired through the day's work they could spare no time or effort for such activities.

It must be pointed out that it is not maintained here that interest in religious matters is a psychological consequence of puberty and adolescence, or that the attitude towards sex is being learnt only at this stage. Such norms as mentioned earlier are being imbibed gradually from childhood. With regard to religious matters, children start by learning about God's power at an early stage, even in their play and riddles. On going to the Kuttab they know how to recite the major Islamic creed, 'There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his Prophet', learn the obligation of fasting through the adult practice and through their own attempts to fast half a day, a day or more according to their capacity in imitation of adults. As far as sex norms are concerned, they begin to express themselves in separate play as early as the age of eight and nine years. But with the dawning of adolescence, the child finds himself awakened to the cumulative

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is to this day judged by the amount of the Koran and the number of prophetic traditions which he can quote, and the number of proverbs and maxims he can bring into the argument. It is not surprising then that out of some twenty learned religious men in the village, five of them are well known for their perfect memorization of the Koran, two for the memorization of many poetic verses of the Sheikhs of the Nakhshabandia sect, thus becoming the leaders of the order in the village, while two others are acknowledged as the most able reciters of verses and charms to ward off the 'evil eye'. From the linguistic point of view, for the speaker to claim that he knows a great deal about a particular thing, event, or person, is for him to assert that he 'memorizes it, or him, to the best of his memory'.[1]

The writer is inclined to assume that the Islamic culture, or at least as it is practised in the Silwa community, emphasizes and fosters rote learning, memory, and enumerative procedures. There is abundant evidence of this in the repetitive elements in greetings, in conversation, in the verses and choruses in folk singing, in the ritual of the mystical orders (zikr), in the need to know the ninety-nine attributes of God, and the thirty-three names of the Prophet, and in the traditional way of memorizing the Koran in the Kuttab. In this connection, MacDonald says, 'Moslem practice was to repeat aloud until the thing was learnt—that is, by heart. They had observed, too, that no special thought was called for, only continued repetition.'[2]

In stating that the village culture mainly stimulates memory as the most important cognitive process one does not necessarily imply that people in the village have good memories. This emphasis on memory could be related to what Bateson calls the eidos of a culture, meaning by it that a culture might have a bias for the standardization of the cognitive aspects of the personality of its participants expressed in their cultural behaviour.[3] One is tempted here to ask a similar question to that posed by Bateson himself as to what extent this bias for amassing knowledge is limited only to a small number of specialists. In attempting an answer, it must be remembered that the stimulation of a small number of specialists can react on the culture as a whole; they have set themselves up as the leaders of the village life both in religious and social matters. From this it is fairly justified to conclude, as Bateson did, that 'the individuals most affected by the stimulation of memory actually contribute very much more than their fellows to the elaboration and maintenance of the culture'.[4]

[1] The equivalent phrase to this in the colloquial language of the village is 'hafdanuh hifd', in classical Arabic 'ahfathuh hiftha'.

[2] MacDonald, *Aspects of Islam*, New York, 1911. The resort to rote learning has been the bane of education in modern schools. Criticisms of students' 'parrot-like' work are abundant in many of the official Government Reports. See E. Claparède, *Rapport Général Présenté au Ministre de l'Instruction Publique*, Cairo, 1929; F. O. Mann, *A Report on Certain Aspects of Egyptian Education*, Cairo, 1929; Ministry of Education, *Report on Secondary Education*, Cairo, 1935.

[3] Gregory Bateson, *Naven*, p. 220.

[4] Ibid., pp. 226–7.

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828 [159] children and adults have their feet firmly established on the ground, and fancies of imagination are neither encouraged nor desirable.

My informant, Ali, told me a point which is relevant to this question [154] of imagination. He said that one should not think in terms of 'if' or 'as if', as according to the prophetic tradition, ' "if" opens the path for the Devil's advance'. It is also interesting to mention that the classical Arabic word for imagination (khayal) is used in the village to denote 'shadow', and does not refer to a mental process, except, of course, to some literate persons. This does not mean that some children are not imaginative, and they are recognized by other children who may sometimes sneer at them by asking them to relate some of their fantasies (literally pinches). Children would tell you that such flights of fancy run through certain families. Adults, however, do not expect children to use, much less exercise or enrich, their imagination as this would hamper their social and economic maturity.

811 In discussing the formal educational institutions in the village at the 794 present time, the Kuttab comes first in importance, as it is the indigenous school for memorizing the Koran. The word 'Kuttab' is an old Arabic word, connected in its etymological derivation with the word 'kitab' (book), being the place where the Holy Book is learnt. The educational 816 ideals and methods of this institution are mainly influenced by the Islamic tradition of learning, an example of which is the advice given by the Caliph Harun al Rashid to al-Ahmar, the tutor of his son, al-Amin, in which he said: 'O, Ahmar, I have given you the child of my blood, the fruit of my loins, and given you power over him, and made him obedient to you; therefore prove worthy of this position. Teach him the Koran, History, Poetry, Traditions, and appreciation of eloquence. Prevent him from laughing except on proper occasions. Accustom him to respect the Sheikhs of the Hashimite family, and to offer a place to the military commanders if they attend to his council. . . . Do not be too kind to him, or he will take to idleness. Improve him kindly, but if that will not suffice, you can treat him harshly.'[1]

Another example would also serve to illustrate the content and method of Islamic education. This is taken from the instructions given by 'Amr Ibn 'Utbah to the tutor of his sons: 'My sons will be deeply influenced by you: favour what you do, and abhor what you avoid. Teach them the Koran, but without wearying them of it, recite to them what is good in traditions, and chaste in poetry. . . . Teach them the virtues of wise men, 000 and keep them away from women's conversation.'[2] Whether with private

[532] content and of 'perspective' in technique; with persons walking sideways in the ancient Egyptian tradition of drawing.
For similar results about free drawings, see Margaret Mead, *Growing up in New Guinea*, p. 12.

[1] A. Ibn Khaldoun, *al-Mukkadimah*, Cairo, p. 399 (Arabic).

[2] A. Shalaby, 'History of Moslem Education' (Ph.D. Thesis, unpublished, Cambridge University, 1950).

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tutors or in the Kuttab, the most important content in learning is the memorizing of the Koran as the basis of all other knowledge. The Kuttab has been, and is still in many remote villages in Aswan, the institution for religious learning, in which children learn part or the whole of the Koran, to be able to use this knowledge for their recitation and prayers, and the observation of correct ritual and prayer. The learning of reading and writing was always secondary to this all-important aim.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries a great number of Kuttabs were financed by the revenue derived from charitable foundations called 'Wakfs'.[1] It was not until 1906 that these schools felt the impact of the central Government authority. In that year the Kuttab was organized, and a system of inspection and awards was worked out in accordance with which Kuttabs satisfying the official requirements could avail themselves of it. The aid was dependent upon daily instruction in the three R's, together with religious teaching, combined with a report of the Ministry of Education Inspector as to the general conditions of the Kuttab.[2] Later on, private awards were given to those boys who could satisfy the Inspector in an oral examination that they had learnt all the Koran by heart.

In Silwa and its neighbouring villages, there is only one aided 'Maktab', which is the official name for a recognized Kuttab, besides the other five unrecognized Kuttabs.[3] It is significant to note that four out of the six Kuttabs are attached to, or situated very near, a mosque, and the fifth is adjacent, and connected with a clan's guest house. Apart from the obvious connection between the mosque and religious learning in the Kuttab, such a proximity between the Kuttab, the mosque and the clan guest house enables the Kuttab boys to fetch water from the wells of the mosque or the clan guest house to be used for drinking, or for cleaning their wooden tablets. Out of the six Sheikhs running the Kuttabs in Silwa, three are blind. The Kuttab building usually consists of two rooms, with a raised dais in each room for the Sheikh. There is hardly any equipment, except the Sheikh's prayer mat, and the wooden tablets on which the boys write their Koranic assignment. The aided Kuttab is, however, an exception, as it has wooden seats, desks, and a blackboard, and is whitewashed. All the Kuttabs, except the aided one, are confined to boys. Only recently have some girls begun to attend the aided Kuttab, as attendance at it exempts both boys and girls from going to the compulsory school. In fact, throughout the history of Moslem Egypt the keenness on teaching girls the Koran has never been so strong as in the case of boys. MacDonald mentioned, however, that there are records of

[1] J. Hayworth-Dunne, *An Introduction to the History of Education in Modern Egypt.*

[2] Ministry of Education, *Code of Regulations Relating to Grants-in-Aid to Kuttabs*, No. 1161, May 1906.

[3] The Kuttab is usually referred to in Silwa by the name Khalwa—a word which literally means 'an isolated place for worship'.

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learned women who had finished a Kuttab course and proceeded to a higher educational course in either al-Azhar or the College Mosques (Madrasah); but their numbers were very small in comparison.[1] I was told by one of the Kuttab Sheikhs that some of the pious ancestors recommended that women should only know a few chapters of the Koran to enable them to say their prayers, and also to learn particularly Surat al-Nur.[2] He went on further to say that Imam Malik thought it inadvisable to teach reading and writing to girls as well as to the sons of 'tyrants and oppressors'.[3]

The following is an account of how a boy spends his day in the Kuttab. The day begins always before sunrise and the first boy who arrives in the morning opens the Kuttab door with the key which is usually hidden underneath the door or outside the threshold. The Sheikh (always called by the boys 'Our Master')[4] arrives later, usually after sunrise; until his arrival, the boys would be busy reciting their assigned portion of the Koran which they had written on their wooden tablets the day before. On the Sheikh's arrival, older or more advanced boys would one by one hand over their tablet to the Sheikh and go on reciting what is written on it, and on satisfying the Sheikh as to their proper and accurate memorizing, they would be asked to clean their tablets and proceed to the next assignment. The same procedure is followed with the younger boys. Those who have failed to satisfy the Sheikh by forgetting sentences or hesitating in the correct pronunciation would be asked to go on repeating their assignment to be heard again by the Sheikh later on. In his work in the Kuttab, the Sheikh, especially if he is blind, relies a great deal on one or two monitors ('areef).

After proving that they have learnt their assignment, the boys are asked to wash their tablets with water, the drops of which must fall into a pot, and not be allowed to fall on to the ground as they contain the dissolved words of God on which no one should tread, as this is considered to be sacrilege (haram). This also applies to the tablet itself when the assignment is written on it, and a boy who drops it on the ground has to kiss it in respect. After washing the tablet with water, however, thus removing the previous writing, a layer of whitish clay is put on it to render the surface fit for writing again. The ink is made by the boys themselves, by mixing fine oven soot with ground roasted nuts of a gum tree together with some gum. This mixture is left for some time to brew before it is actually

[1] D. B. MacDonald, *Aspects of Islam*, pp. 293–4.

[2] On looking up this Koranic chapter, the writer found that it mainly dealt with preventive measures against fornication and slander, and related the story of 'Ayisha, the Prophet's wife, when she was slandered by enemies, and how God revealed the truth about her chastity.

[3] The writer had no opportunity of checking the truth of this statement attributed to Imam Malik.

[4] The Kuttab Sheikh is usually called by this title, 'Our Master', even by adults, especially the illiterate people—see Taha Hussein, *al-Ayyam* (An Egyptian Childhood).

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used. The pens are made out of maize stalks, the end being sharpened to a point by a razor. This point is then divided in the middle.

After the tablets have been dried in the sun the time for writing the new assignment comes. Monitors gather the boys around them and dictate to them, either from memory or from a copy of the Koran, what they should write. The monitor dictates to each of his pupils in turn, a sentence at a time, and so comes back to the first one, and this continues until the dictation is finished. Some of the beginners do actually use the tablets for writing without actually knowing how to write, although they might be able to recite the alphabet. What really happens is that the monitor manipulates the hand of his pupil on the tablet, or he may write the lines with his fingernail on the tablet, asking the young boy to trace his writing with the pen. He then asks each of the boys to read back to him what he has written. After this the monitors themselves start writing their assignment, which they should read to the Sheikh seated at his feet.

All this takes place in the morning (until about ten o'clock), after which the children are allowed an interval for breakfast. They go home for this and return after a short time to resume the second working period, which lasts until noon, and during which the boys will be reading their written assignment under the supervision of the monitors.[1] Sitting facing the walls, with their tablets in front of them, the boys will be reciting aloud their set texts and swaying their heads and bodies forwards and backwards. The babble and din of the Kuttab is the sure sign for the Sheikh that it is busy and hard-working, for immediately the din dies down, the Sheikh will incite his boys to raise their voices and get on with their work. If the boys persist in any disobedience, the Sheikh would use his stick, laying about him without exception, hitting their backs, whereupon their voices would rise and go again at full pitch. This repetition continues until noon, when the Sheikh claps his hands, letting the boys go for their lunch.

After the lunch recess the boys return to the Kuttab, each carrying a loaf of bread for the Sheikh. This has been selected by the mother as one of her best-baked loaves. Some children do not take loaves with them, but, as a result of an agreement between the Sheikh and the father, the former receives a stipulated amount of corn at the end of each harvest. The loaf, however, is a token of the teacher's work, and ideally, he who teaches the Holy Book is not expected to ask for a remuneration. In fact, the Sheikh receives in addition to the daily loaf certain gifts on various occasions, such as when the boy finishes his alphabet and begins to write the first chapter of the Koran, at the end of each section (juza) and so on. He also receives a white garment, in addition to other gifts, when the boy finishes the whole of the Koran.

The first part of the afternoon work in the Kuttab is taken up with

[1] The time in the Kuttab is not regulated by the hour, but is usually fixed either by the noisy arrival or departure of a train, or according to the shadow cast by the sun from the wall, or a boy's shadow.

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more memorizing of what was written in the morning, irrespective of whether the boy has actually learnt it or not during the previous period. The latter part until the afternoon prayer ('asr) would perhaps be occupied with revising the previous assignments. This is mainly co-operative work where groups of children are formed, according to the level of their advancement in their learning. On other afternoons, instead of such revision, boys may practise penmanship by writing out the alphabet, or copying out the prophetic tradition.

Such is the procedure followed every day in all the village Kuttabs, except on Thursdays, when boys leave the school after the morning break and take Friday as a holiday. On Thursday morning the boys do not write any new assignment from the Koran, but spend the morning either listening to readings from the Prophet's life and trying to learn some of the poems in his praise, or by imbibing some religious teaching, such as lustration, prayer ritual, and Islamic obligations. This might be followed by a general sweeping of the Kuttab floor in which everybody takes part. Thursday morning always ends with a congregational prayer which is said firstly by the older boys, and then repeated by the rest. The text of the prayer is as follows:

O, our Lord, O, our Lord,
Who listens to our petitions,
By the sanctity of Mohammed,
Frustrate not our hopes.
Mohammed is the son of Abdullah,
and the reader of Allah's Book.
As the Holy One in Paradise,
Calls us to enter into his company
Where he will give us the drink as we shall give unto him
From the Springs of Paradise,
O, our Sheikh (who is present), may God forgive his sins,
For us and for him, the door of Paradise,
As the door of Paradise is (prepared) for the Moslems
And the door of the Fire for the Unbelievers.

After this is finished, they all recite together:

O, our Mustapha (one of the names of the Prophet), accept our petition,
And teach us knowledge, and increase in that abundantly.

This prayer will be followed by the Sheikh's exhortation to all the boys to be obedient to their parents, revise at home those parts of the Koran which they have already learnt, not to play idly in the streets, and to the older boys to attend the Friday prayers in the mosque. Then the 'Fatiha' will be read by the Sheikh; and the boys, after kissing the Sheikh's hand, go home or straight to the field.

INDIGENOUS LEARNING AND TEACHING

This is the normal routine of the Kuttab, one which has now been challenged by the compulsory school which does not allow any boy between seven and twelve years old to attend the Kuttab for a full day, and at present only those who are less than seven or over twelve can afford to remain in the Kuttab for the full day. In spite of this some of the compulsory school boys attend the Kuttab early in the morning where they write their Koranic assignment before going to the school; some of them bring their loaves of bread at lunch-time for the Sheikh, and spend about an hour after the end of the school day in the Kuttab learning the Koran.

The Kuttab is not merely an educational institution for the boys. Adults also visit it to consult the Sheikh about certain religious matters, to have a letter written, or a charm supplied against the evil eye, or just to listen to the Koran being recited, or even for an ordinary chat. They have free access to the Kuttab, sitting outside or in the outer room, or they may enter it to ask the Sheikh's permission to take away their boy temporarily for some pressing errand or task. One occasionally sees adults bringing food or tea to Kuttab children as a 'karama', or to invoke the boys' purity in asking God to fulfil one of his wishes. The Kuttab boys are supposed to combine the innocence of children with the 'baraka' of the Koran, and hence their prayers are usually answered by God. Parents go to the Kuttab to complain to the Sheikh about the misdemeanours of their sons, whereupon the Sheikh would give the boys concerned a lesson on the importance of obedience to parents, or threaten them, or even thrash them in front of their parents. The method of discipline in the Kuttab is that of *jus flagelli*. In cases of serious offences such as offending one's father or swearing at religion, or mentioning the mother in swearing, two strong boys would hold the offender's feet in a turban (usually the offender's turban if he wears one), and lift them in front of the Sheikh, who would administer the striking as he deems fit. The corporal punishment administered to the children by the Kuttab Sheikh is almost universally accepted by the villagers without complaint. During my stay, there was only one occasion on which one of the villagers lodged a complaint against the Sheikh to the police, accusing the former of unduly thrashing his son, and this, according to the Sheikh himself, was the first event of its kind in his lifetime. Since then none of the Sheikhs has accepted that boy in his Kuttab.

The Sheikhs are indeed highly respected in the village, for they not only teach the boys the Koran, but derive their status from the fact that they are the perpetuators of the Holy Book giving enlightenment to the people on religious matters. In Silwa and its neighbouring villages, the leaders of the mosque prayers (Imams) are always Kuttab Sheikhs, and people seek their advice if they are in doubt whether a particular action or deed is in conformity with religious injunctions. Some of them also recite the Koran during the nightly celebration in Ramadan and at

1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

'mulids', weddings and funerals. They are never addressed without the prefix of 'Sheikh'.

In evaluating the educational aims of the Kuttab, one must remember the purpose of such an institution in a community like Silwa, and its aims in Egyptian society in general during the eighteenth century for instance. The present Kuttab in Silwa fulfills the task demanded of it by the people in maintaining the standards of Islamic learning in which the memorizing of the Koran comes first and foremost. Indeed, the religious and moral ideals of Islam have determined the scope of Islamic education. For the Greeks, education was part of politics, for the Moslems it is part of a comprehensive system of theology. For the latter the object of education is the salvation of the soul and not the control of nature and society.[1]

To expect the Kuttabs to prepare children for practical life or to teach them arithmetic, drawing, or rhythmic movements, according to some of the modern critics of these institutions, is to assume modern standards and social demands in a society which by its very organization does not require its schools to provide such activities. This is the task of the parents, and is to be learnt through life itself. It must be emphasized here that children are sent to the Kuttab voluntarily and they themselves are not averse to attending it to learn part of the Koran. Indeed, the alternative is for the children to work hard in the fields. The Kuttab Sheikhs are fully aware of the drawbacks of the educational system in the village at present. They see that the learning of the Koran by the children is interrupted by compulsory schooling, that parents do not leave their children undisturbed in the Kuttabs but frequently withdraw them to help at home or in the fields. They also complain that fewer boys remain in the Kuttab to go through the Koran again, after they finish the first time, and thus they forget it quickly. Nevertheless, in spite of what one may say of the Kuttab, it is evident from the opinions of the villagers that one cannot ignore the strength of the religious motive that renders this educational institution an integral part of the community. Practically every family in the village with more than two sons would like, as an ideal, to dedicate one of them 'to the cause of knowledge' (Ilm). Moreover, one notices that it is usually the younger brothers who attend the Kuttab, as the older brothers are more often needed for father's aid in farm work. Yet it is not unusual to hear of a man taking a vow to send his first son to the Kuttab, for this means an economic sacrifice for the sake of 'baraka', emanating from learning the Koran. Sending the youngest boy to the Kuttab is considered as a way of showing parental affection for the last born, by sparing him the arduous tasks of working in the fields. Blind boys find in the Kuttab a place where they can absorb themselves in learning the Koran, and it is mostly these blind boys who remain in the Kuttab until they finish memorizing the whole of it.

[1] See for example the writings of Al-Ghazali, *Ihya-ulum-iddin* (Boulak, 1872); Az-Zarnuji, *Ta 'lim al Muta'allim Wa Tariqat at-ta 'allum* (translated by G. E. von Grunebaum and Theodora M. Abel, New York, 1947).

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

the Kuttab until they finish memorizing the whole of it. It will be shown in the next chapter how the role of the Kuttab has been seriously challenged by the modern system of schools.

In addition to the Kuttab, the village mystic order of Nakshabandia must be considered as an organized educational institution for adolescents and young men, where they enjoy comradeship of 'The Path' and learn religious and mystic practices, stories and verses.[1]

[1] See Chapter IX.

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

Appendix One

THE LIFE HISTORY OF INFORMANTS

GENERAL REMARKS

In writing the life history of my informants—Ali (who is a distant relative) and Mahmoud (who is related by marriage)—I found very little direct information forthcoming from them. Although their confidence was won with respect to their forthrightness in describing the village life and traditions, both were very reserved in talking about their own life. Neither relished the idea of being singled out from the whole village, or being mentioned in a book. 'Why do you want to portray my life especially, and bring it before the English people?' said Mahmoud. 'Let us (in Arabic the plural pronoun is commonly used instead of the first singular) live covered and unexposed in our village; we do not want other people to know about the details of our life.' The writer realized this difficulty from the very beginning of his work, and tried to convince the villagers, as well as the informants, that such research had nothing to do with the Government or any other official authority in Egypt and might bring indirect benefit to them, for the suspicion had to be eradicated that anything written might be taken as a personal commitment, causing as much anxiety to the persons concerned as if they were giving evidence in a court of law. This difficulty rose again in the Rorschach testing of adults, whom the writer had to assure and even sometimes to swear by the name of Allah that this would not subject them to any official pressure or interference.

ALI

Ali, being literate, was asked to write down all he could remember of his life-story, the account of which is translated in the following:

'I was born in 1921, just a few days before the "Mawlid", the birth anniversary of the Prophet. I cannot remember anything in my life till the age of seven, except that I used to follow my older brother to the Kuttab from the age of five, and play with boys of my age. On reaching the age of seven, I started to go regularly all by myself to the Kuttab. In 1929 I began to go to the elementary school in the morning, and to the Kuttab in the afternoon, and I remained in the school until 1936, when

[P.240 is blank]

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

APPENDIX I

I had to leave and concentrate on memorizing the Koran. After one year I finished the Koran and recited it for my Sheikh Ahmad Mousa to his satisfaction.[1] Then my father offered a "Karama" in the Kuttab, consisting of a meal of wheat bread and meat eaten in the Kuttab by the boys and whoever is present (as one is not supposed to invite persons for a "karama") together with a gift of a white garment to the Sheikh. This was followed by a ceremony called "dorah" (classical "dawrah") going round the village, with sheikhs reciting odes (qasidas) in praise of the Prophet, beating the drum and the tambourine (tar), and followed by other local folk as well as the Kuttab children. On this occasion I wore white clothes; this is a holy practice like that of pilgrims returning from Mecca, who also don white clothes.[2] After this, I stayed in the Kuttab as an "Areef-prefect", repeating the Koran three times during the first year, at the end of which I sat for an examination (oral) set by one of the Ministry of Education inspectors, and on passing it I received a prize of £E2. I remained as an "areef" for three years, teaching the other children, learning the "Munawi mawled"—a rhyming prose as well as poems on the birth of the Prophet, the "matn-al-Ishmawi"—in the Islamic law (Fikh), "Matn al Jawhara" in monotheistic theology (Tawheed), which is in poem form. From the age of nine I had to help my father and older brother in farm work, but I was not pressed to work as my family wished me to devote myself to Koranic studies, and this is one of the things that distinguished me from many other boys in the village. But later in life, especially after my marriage, I had to work harder in the fields. My older brother was responsible for bringing fertilizer from the hill, while my father and myself helped in the other farm tasks such as irrigation, distribution of manure, and harvesting.

'In 1940 I went to Edfu, where the first stage of military conscription examinations takes place, and I was exempted on the basis of my knowing the Koran, after I had succeeded in the oral examination held for the purpose.[3]

'A year before I was called up for conscription, I left the Kuttab and devoted myself to farm work, and I got married when I was nineteen years old. I worked on my father's land until 1944, when I was appointed as a malaria supervisor to distribute tablets of quinine to the families during the malaria epidemic. For this purpose I had to make a survey of the population in the village to distribute the tablets, accordingly asking the

[1] A memory task of some magnitude: the Koranic text is a little longer than that of the New Testament.

[2] Wearing of white clothes on certain occasions is a symbol of ceremonial cleanliness and purity.

[3] Till 1948, sons of village omdas and sheikhs, those who paid £E20 exemption fee, those who knew the Koran by heart and University students could be exempted from military conscription. Since then a law has been passed decreeing that military conscription is universal, with very few exemptions, e.g. the single supporter of a family in the case of the father's death.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt
COPTS MR10

I mounted my donkey and accompanied them. The women went only a short way with us, and we left them, the hysterical sister in their midst, huddled together on the high road which led through the cultivation, still shrieking, smiting their faces, and waving their arms aloft. As we passed on toward the peaceful desert their cries grew fainter and fainter in the distance, till at last no sound broke the stillness save the occasional singing of a hymn by the men who formed the funeral *cortège*.

When we arrived at the gate of the monastery every one passed within the precincts, and the bearers carried the coffin into the church, setting it down in front of the curtain behind which was the altar. We all entered the sacred building, and a seat was offered to me close to the corpse. There was a large assembly of both Copts and Muslims, for the dead man was much respected by the followers of both religions among whom he had lived. We waited and waited, but still there was no sign of a priest. The men beguiled the time by talking and smoking, and, though I am sure it was not at all intentional, there was an extraordinary lack of reverent demeanour in those present. At last the priest arrived. The whole congregation immediately rose to their feet, and after the priest had shaken hands with me the others came forward in turns and kissed his hand. The lid of the coffin was now removed, and the body disclosed, wrapped in its white and green coverings. A very dirty cloth, on which was sewn a cross in green, was placed over the body, and candles were lighted and stuck to the sides of the coffin—six on each side and one each at the head and feet. This was accomplished by dropping some of the melting wax from the lighted candles on to the coffin and sticking the candles on to it. Two larger candles were fitted into large candlesticks placed on either side of the head of the coffin. These candlesticks were possibly of silver, but were in such a dirty state that it was impossible to guess with any certainty of what they were made.

The service then began. It was very long, lasting for three hours or more! The priest was accompanied by the *'arīf*, as the man who leads the singing in a Coptic church is called. The latter was quite blind, and had a very resonant voice. When he sang he accompanied himself on a pair of cymbals. There was a great deal of this 'music,' and also recitations by the priest of portions of the Gospels. Furthermore, another man, whom he singled out from among those present, likewise read passages from the

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt
COPTS MR 10

THE FELLĀḤĪN OF UPPER EGYPT

Scriptures. After interminable readings and chantings there was a pause, and one of the mourners present clapped his hands, thus commanding the attention of every one in the church. He then began the funeral oration, extolling the dead man and mentioning many of his good deeds. He spoke with great fervour and sincerity, though he was himself a Muslim, and I much admired his restrained gestures, his fluency, and his clear enunciation. He was really a good speaker and entirely devoid of self-consciousness. After the speech was ended the candles were put out and removed from the sides of the coffin, the lid was replaced, the bearers hoisted the coffin on to their shoulders, and, preceded by the priest and the *'arīf*, walked three times round the church, followed by all the mourners. After the third perambulation they came down the centre of the building, and so out of the church to the place of burial.

There is no service at the grave among the Copts, and after loud-voiced and conflicting advice from every man in the crowd assembled round the grave the coffin was at last successfully lowered to its final resting-place, a vault in which a number of interments had already been made. Finally the opening to the vault was bricked up and the earth flung back into its place again, and we all set off for our several abodes.

The mourning at the house usually lasts for seven days, as with the Muslims, though the period is sometimes reduced to three days only. During those seven or three days, according to one of my Coptic informants, no food is cooked in the house of mourning, but supplies are brought in by village friends. According to the same informant, prayers are offered up in the church by the priest on the third, seventh, fifteenth, and fortieth days after a death; these prayers are believed to be the means of saving a lost soul. During the fifteen days the house of mourning is not swept, but no reason was given for this custom.

On the third day after a death has taken place a priest, attended by the *'arīf*, goes to the house of the dead man or woman. Some of the uneducated Copts believe that the priest on this occasion dismisses the soul of the dead person from the house, where it is believed to remain until that day. I was present for this ceremony after the death of the Copt whose funeral I described above. As his relations were very poor people the ceremony was doubtless far less elaborate than it would be in the case of people in a better position.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

'bride of the corn' (*'arūset el-ḥamḥ*), is used as a charm. One may be suspended over the house-door as an antidote to the evil eye; another may be hung up in the room containing the stores of food, as a charm to ensure abundance. Many tradesmen hang such objects in their shop-windows, believing that this will bring them plenty of customers. Again, in some parts of Egypt the 'bride of the corn' is temporarily placed on the heaps of grain after the winnowing is completed, as a charm to secure a good harvest the following year. Sometimes the grain from these heads of corn is extracted and mixed with the next year's sowing. The 'bride' may be left hanging till it is replaced at the next harvest, or, again, it may be allowed to remain in its place until it falls to pieces (Fig. 99).

FIG. 98. THE ARCHIMEDEAN SCREW

Before the field is cut a certain number of people are given presents of corn by the owner. These gifts of the firstfruits are bestowed on some of the poorest people in the village, as well as on the barber, the *mueddin* (the man who chants the call to prayer from the mosque), the *summāreh*-player, the carpenter, and the *fuḳahā*—the last-mentioned being poor men who recite the Ḳorān in mosques, in private houses, at funeral ceremonies, and at the periodical visits to the grave (see pp. 112, 114 f., 117 ff., and Fig. 100).

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

CHAPTER XVI

SOME ANNUAL FESTIVALS

THE *Mūlid en-Nebi*, the annual celebration of the birthday of the Prophet, is of course the most important of all the festivals held in honour of Muslim saints. However, I shall content myself here with a description of some of the annual *mawālid* (plural of *mūlid*) held in honour of local village saints which I have attended myself during my six years' sojourn in Egypt.

The sheikh Umbārak is buried in a village in Middle Egypt, and a whitewashed domed building has been erected above his grave. One or two of the outside walls of his tomb are, as is customary, decorated with pictures descriptive of the pilgrimage to Mecca,[1] roughly sketched in red and blue paint, the remainder being inscribed with passages from the Ḳorān. Around the dome are small, what might almost be called clerestory windows, in each of which a lighted candle is placed every night. There is a female 'servant' attached to this sheikh, who is supposed to keep the tomb in order, receive the donations of devotees, and light the candles every evening. One wonders how she manages to carry out this work satisfactorily, as she is quite blind!

The *mūlid* held in honour of the sheikh Umbārak takes place in April and begins early in the afternoon, on the morning of which day similar festivals are inaugurated in certain neighbouring villages in honour of their own particular sheikhs.

At about two o'clock a large crowd collected in the vicinity of the sheikh's tomb, several people, chiefly women, seating themselves around it. The blind servant received donations from the faithful on behalf of the sheikh, part of the time having the sheikh's flag wrapped around her (Fig. 141). As the donors presented their gifts they recited the *Fātiḥah* in low and rapid tones. In the road which ran past the burial-ground, and in the adjacent palm-grove, the holiday-makers engaged in friendly conversation or indulged in various amusements (Fig. 142); and along the roadside booths

[1] See p. 245, Fig. 140.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

had been erected, wherein butchers and vendors of sweetmeats, toys, and other wares plied their trade, to all appearance doing excellent business (Fig. 143).

Eggs dyed a bright cerise or yellow are a special feature of all these *mawâlid*, and those who sold them attracted a considerable number of customers. These coloured eggs, which are also sold on the Coptic Easter Monday, are used for two games, which are played as follows. In one game two boys or men take part, each grasping an egg in his hand. One of them knocks his egg against that of his opponent, and the man whose egg is not cracked is regarded as the winner and takes the cracked egg of his adversary. In the other game several eggs are arranged in a row on the ground, and a number of men sit at a certain distance away from them. Each in turn rolls an egg toward the row of eggs facing him, and the man who first succeeds in cracking one of them wins the lot. These games are played by large numbers of people at all *mawâlid*, but never by women and girls. Coloured eggs are used for games, in many cases similar to these, in various parts of Europe, especially in the Balkan states. Again, in some of the Northern counties of England coloured eggs are still used in a game played on Easter Monday which closely resembles the second Egyptian game.

FIG. 141. FEMALE 'SERVANT' OF THE SHEIKH UMBĀRAK, WRAPPED IN THE SHEIKH'S FLAG ON THE DAY OF HIS MŪLID

There were other attractions at this *mūlid* of the sheikh Umbārak. In the palm-grove a conjurer in one part and a poet

[Text continues on p. 255]

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt
Copts MR10

remain for the whole week, engaging rooms for themselves beforehand if they are not lucky enough to have friends in the neighbourhood with whom they can stay. Certain proceedings which I witnessed at this festival, happily absent from most of the village *mawālid* for Muslim sheikhs which I have attended, would, I fear, have met with the strong disapproval of the good St George!

Ramaḍān is the month of the Muslim fast. From an hour before sunrise till after sunset no food must be eaten by the faithful, and, what is a severer privation in a hot, dry climate like that of Egypt, not a drop of water must pass their lips. I am always filled with admiration for the courageous and cheerful way in which the poor *fellāḥīn* endure this most trying penance, carrying on their tasks with the same light-heartedness that they are wont to display at all times. It is a very serious strain on the fortitude of all those who have to work, and it is especially trying to those officials who observe the fast strictly, and yet whose duties oblige them to travel on tours of inspection or for the investigation of crimes.

On the day following the termination of Ramaḍān, *el-ʿId eṣ-Ṣughaiyar* (Little Festival) is held. It is a day of great rejoicing and is observed as a public holiday, for the trying fast is over at last. Friends visit each other to express their good wishes, and all classes endeavour to show special hospitality in honour of the occasion. The poor are never forgotten on this day of rejoicing, and gifts of money and food are distributed by those who are in more fortunate circumstances.

On this day the dead also are held in remembrance and most families repair to the cemeteries early in the morning, the women carrying baskets on their heads containing bread, dates, and other sweet things, which are distributed in the names of their dead relatives among the poor (Fig. 147). Palm-branches are laid on the graves, or are broken into shorter lengths and stuck upright in front of the tombs. *Fuḳahā* (see p. 172) are always present on these occasions, as most people engage them to recite by the graves, paying them for their services with gifts from their baskets, and sometimes with money also. The rest of the day is given up to festivities, which are continued for two days more.

El-ʿId el-Kibīr (the Great Festival, held in commemoration of the sacrifice of Isaac) follows forty days later, and a public holiday of three or four days' duration is observed. Quantities of grain are given as gifts to the poorer folk by those who possess

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt
Ancient Egypt MR5

F A 585

entertained all the household of Pharaoh." This account suggests that in ancient as in modern times the bride's furniture was conveyed with some ceremony from her parents' house to that of her husband (p. 93); we also see that the ancient like the modern bridegroom used to entertain his male friends on the night of his marriage (p. 93).

F A 586

It is stated on p. 95 that a sum of money is sometimes paid by the party who applies for a divorce to the other party. That, as can be seen from the ancient marriage-contract translated above, and from those published by Professor Griffith,[1] was the prevailing custom in late Pharaonic and Ptolemaic Egypt. Ancient bills of divorcement are still extant, the earliest dating from the time of Darius, and some of them have been published and translated by Professor Griffith.[2]

F A 847 789

It is interesting to observe, in connexion with the modern practice (p. 107) of a mother's attaching a small piece of fox-skin to the head of her last-born living child to ensure her bearing again, that the sign (*ms*), used in writing the verb *msy* (give birth) and its derivatives, consists in well-formed examples of three fox-skins tied together.[3] This suggests that there may have been some association of foxes with fertility in ancient Egypt.

F A 764 778 823

The water used for washing a dead Muslim is brought either from a mosque or from some sacred well or pool connected with a sheikh (p. 109). Similarly, in ancient times the formulæ pronounced while the washing of the corpse took place state that the water has issued from Elephantine, and so is the exudation of Osiris, or that it has been drawn from some sacred pool connected with the sun-cult, or that it is the efflux of the sun-god or the womb of the sky-goddess out of which the god emerged.[4]

F [794]

That the washer of the corpse may be a *fiḳīh* (p. 109) shows that this performance still possesses some, though probably quite vague, religious significance.

The utterly uncontrolled grief displayed by the women when

A [113]

[1] See p. 291, footnote 6.

[2] *Catalogue of the Demotic Papyri in the John Rylands Library*, vol. iii, p. 117.

[3] See A. M. Blackman, *Man*, vol. ix, pp. 9 f.; L. Borchardt, *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache*, vol. xliv, pp. 75 f.; A. Erman, *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache*, vol. xlv, p. 92.

[4] See A. M. Blackman, *Recueil de travaux relatifs à la philologie et l'archéologie égyptiennes*, vol. xxxix, pp. 44 ff.; *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archæology*, vol. xl, pp. 57–66, 86–91; *Journal of Egyptian Archæology*, vol. v, pp. 117 ff., 157 ff.

3: Ayrout M-5 (ca. 1935) 1945
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Egypt MR1

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651

It merely presupposes a taxpayer whose financial arrangements are never unsound, and a yield with no great variation.

If then we add to the property tax (about L.E. 5,500,000) the excise from the sale of cotton and the revenue from State domains, the land provides the Government with about L.E. 10,000,000 a year, which represents about a quarter of budget receipts.

The State is also the chief landowner in Egypt. Apart from the estates included in Mohammed Aly's survey, but not bought by the fellaheen, the State acquired in 1878 the property of the Khedivial family, to pay off a part of the vast debts of Ismail Pasha, and has also enlarged its domains by reclaiming new areas in the region of the lakes and on the edges of the desert.

So out of an agricultural area of 7,000,000 feddans the State still holds one fifth, or 1,470,305. It cultivates directly 418,778 feddans, situated mostly in Lower Egypt. This immense untaxed property is in part mortgaged as security for the National Debt, and in part unproductive.

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Every year, however, the Government brings under cultivation some 8,000 feddans of land formerly too marshy or too dry, and sells off the greater part of it in small lots to private owners. The State domains give work and a livelihood to about two million fellaheen, as either labourers or tenants. Another million work on land which they will never be able to own.

Wakf Lands

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423
794
429

Since the Moslem conquest many landowners have laid all or part of their estates under a sort of entail (*wakf*) (*"*). This they have done partly for religious motives, but also in order to put their wealth out of the reach of confiscation by princes or dissipation by their heirs. This means that by a kind of religious dedication or donation to God they render their properties perpetually inalienable in law. There are two kinds of *wakf*. The revenues of *wakf khairi*, or charitable trusts, are consigned to mosques, schools, cemeteries, homes or other pious foundations. *Wakfs ahli*, on the other hand, are earmarked for the founder's descendants until the family dies out, when they revert to some religious purpose.

God being thus the sole owner, the beneficiaries of *wakf* lands enjoy their revenues, but cannot realise them. The Christians of the Oriental Churches have also followed this method of dealing with property, and today more than 610,000 feddans, or about a sixth of the cultivated area, are thus withdrawn from the market.

A Ministry of Wakfs has the task of administering these ancient Moslem bequests, and ensuring the fulfilment of the founders' wishes. But it is clear that these properties in mortmain, with no human landowner, are the least productive. However, for this very reason, owing to the lack of interest on the part of managers and agents, who are liberally paid out of whatever profits they make, the fellaheen on *wakf* lands have a fairly easy life.

Private Property

Official publications take a pride in pointing out that Egypt is a country of small landowners, and quote recent statistics in support of their claim. It is true that a million and a half fellaheen each own an average of a third of a feddan. Half a million more own from one to five feddans each, and about 150,000 own from 5 to 50 feddans. But these small farmers together do not possess more than half the cultivated land. In 40 years the area held by smallholders has increased by 850,000 feddans or 83%, while the number of the smallholders themselves has increased by 355% [18]. Thus, while on the one hand two and a quarter million fellaheen own less than two million feddans, on the other hand more than two million feddans are in the hands of only 12,559 landowners. Of these, twenty-three Egyptians and twenty-five foreigners own among them some three hundred thousand feddans.

The greatest landowner in the country is the King. The late King Fuad I, who at his accession in 1917 owned eight hundred feddans, had acquired twenty-eight thousand feddans by the time of his death in 1936. This figure does not include the revenues from forty-five thousand feddans of *wakf* land entrusted to his supervision. The estates of limited companies amount to a hundred and fifty thousand feddans. Egypt is still in reality a country of large landowners.

a mat, they listen to the *maazún*, or preacher, as he reads them a chapter from the Koran. F 782 796 516

On Sundays the Christian fellaheen attend the interminable Coptic mass. But here worship is more of a family affair, and women take part in the prayers and chants. F C 788

The Moslems do not understand the literary dialect of the Koran, neither do the Christians understand the Coptic language of their mass. All the fellaheen from one end of Egypt to the other speak what is called 'the vulgar tongue', i.e. colloquial Arabic. This is a dialect differing a great deal in its vocabulary from those of Syria and Morocco. In Egypt there is no distinct dialect in this or that province, but only a number of variant words and expressions, and, in the South, a more guttural pronunciation, which betrays the Upper Egyptian. C F 191 198 788

Fasting is strictly observed by the Moslems in Ramadan and by the Copts in Lent. The former during the holy month abstain from all eating and drinking from dawn to sunset. The latter, for about two hundred days of the year, eat nothing from midnight to midday. F C 785 262

Almsgiving is another obligation which the fellaheen do not neglect. Within the limits of their means they fulfil it ungrudgingly, not in money but in kind. They make gifts to the blind, to ministers of religion, and to those poorer than themselves; and this in addition to regular and compulsory presents. F 735 782 431

On the other hand, few fellaheen make the pilgrimage to Mecca, and if they do, it is at the price of heroic sufferings. The happy pilgrim, on his return after six or eight months' absence, bringing blessings from the holy places to his village, is welcomed like one coming back from the dead. His pious achievement marks him out from the rest, and his children share his renown. He is henceforward always addressed by the title of "*Hagg*" and his pilgrimage is commemorated on the walls of his house. On the white-washed front the crude outlines of men, carriages and ships are painted, with his name and the date. The same customs are observed by Coptic fellaheen who have visited Jerusalem, and thus earned the titled of "*Muqaddis*". C F 794 554 532

More frequented and more popular than the mosque, because there is no distinction of age or sex, is the tomb of F 778

donkey to the fields and the *gamoosa* to the canal, where he climbs on its back and sets it turning the *saqia*. The child learns how to cry out, how to chase off thieving birds with stones, how to pick and even plant cotton. He does not lack amusement, for he has plenty of companions. During the day, when the men are toiling in the fields and the women are busy in the house or by the canal, the whole village belongs to the children. It is they whom a visitor sees first. They paddle stark naked in the pond, and learn to swim. They have bulging bellies, for they eat anything and everything. They play in the dust, spinning an onion as a top, hopping on one leg and holding the other heel with their hands, or shooting with a catapult (*nibla*) at date-palms or birds. When they are a little older they play at *siga*, a kind of marble game with small pebbles which have to be moved into forty-nine holes made in the sand.

At about the age of seven the young fellah is circumcised, and thus introduced into the world of men. At this stage he has to go to the elementary school (*ilzamiya*), at least in the mornings. His parents are bound to send him, under pain of a fine of twenty piastres, or fifty for a second offence. 95% of the fellaheen are illiterate, and the Government wishes to wipe out this disgrace from the next generation. The 1923 Constitution decreed that education should be compulsory, but it is only since 1935 that this order has begun to take effect. Schools are being established all over the countryside. Gradually sites are being found in the villages, schools set up, and teachers appointed. Every year, places that within living memory had never seen a teacher are provided with a complete teaching staff. In 1946 there should be 4,600 free elementary schools, and the whole child population will be receiving instruction (41).

The parents do not understand these new ideas. Though accustomed to other tyrannical institutions, they do not resign themselves to this. Some Upper Egyptians of 'Ezbet Balkan, who had been fined for not sending their children to the compulsory Government school, attacked the teachers and wounded them. The peasants care little for education. They only want their children to help them to increase their earnings. Moreover, most villages are still served, according to the ancient system, by a *kuttab*, in which a blind teacher, seated on the ground, gathers a few children round him and teaches them the Koran.

857 [524] 852 872 656 [212] 177 871 183 579 871 794

871 His methods are by no means arduous. Two or three
794 hours a day, six months a year, and in three years the fellah children, helped by the stick, will know a good many *suras* by heart. For his pains the *fiqih* or teacher receives two loaves of bread, or one piastre, a week for each pupil.

872 Nowadays even the girls must go to school, but their
562 turn comes in the afternoon. In the morning they help their mothers and fetch in the water, trying their best to
[482] balance on their heads the little *ballas* which is given them.
857 When they grow up they will be able to carry seven gallons of water in this way. They are also made to gather dung, bird-droppings, and any other refuse which may be useful in the house or the field. They make fuel cakes (*gilla*) by
[372] taking a little mud, some chopped straw and a quantity of dung, which they knead into a paste with their hands and feet, and then take lumps of, to flatten into cakes about eight inches across. These are spread out on the ground to dry in the sun, or stuck on the wall. When thoroughly dry they are piled up on the roof. These dung-cakes are the fellah's coal; they are an essentially agricultural form of fuel, used wherever wood and money are lacking, for example in China and in several parts of France.

524 The girls have rag dolls to play with, but more often,
857 up to the age of about twelve, they join with the boys in both work and play. Occasionally, from the age of eight
[464] until they get married, they go into service in middle-class homes.

857 These children are ignorant and to all appearance neg-
593 lected. They live in a herd and seem to have no patronymics. But it would be wrong to infer from this that they are of no concern to their parents, and belong to the community at large. On the contrary their parents love them passionately, far more than they, love each other. Children are never put
[736] up for sale here as they are in China, and there is no need for orphanages. Parental sensitiveness is a frequent cause of quarrels among both men and women. If a teacher hits or
861 ill-treats their child they are up in arms immediately to
871 remove him from school and take a brutal vengeance. This does not, however, stop them from using blows and insults to 'educate' their children themselves.

593 The children are also very much attached to both their parents. This attachment seems to be rooted in their

747 361 291 431 expense, which amounts to about L.E. 70. These *gallabiyas* are not distributed anyhow, but fitted individually by the *nâzer's* wife, according to height and taste. At the Bairam festival there is a general distribution of meat, four pounds to a person, which costs about L.E. 40. Fat is also given to those who have no *gamoossa*. The fruit crop of the orchard is shared out at intervals. Whenever a child is born, a set of baby-clothes is provided.

[426] When a fellah gets into debt, the *nâzer* advances him what he needs, without any trickery. The man pays it off by days of work.

[312 515] Drinking-water is supplied to all from a pump at the entrance to the *'ezba*. A dozen lavatories and two shower-baths have been set up near the mosque.

This beautiful mosque, built by the Christian landowner, who also provides for an *imam*, brings together the menfolk [346 794] of the *'ezba* and its surroundings. A *kuttab* was attached to it, but this has been closed since the opening of an *ilzamiya* school in the next village.

[758 743] Fellaheen who go sick are cared for by the *nâzer*, who has by practice become something of a doctor, or sent to the Government doctor at Mit Ghamr. The wife of this kindly manager, when she was there, used to take care of the people herself, wash their eyes, and give them clothes and good habits too. For twenty-four years she stood at her husband's side.

[152 181] When she died, they showed that fellaheen are not incapable of gratitude. They discovered by childish tricks, in spite of efforts to keep the truth from them, that she was seriously ill in Cairo. Thirty of them piled into a couple of taxis and drove off to the hospital. It was like a public demonstration, people said. Later, when they saw the *nâzer* and his children coming back in mourning from the cemetery, their grief was as spontaneous as it was general.

This mother left her daughter an example to follow. And follow it she does, with her gentleness and good temper and her mastery of Arabic. It is easy to see how much they love her, those unloved peasants.

This experiment in social justice has not made either the owner or the *nâzer* any the poorer. The estate is one of the most productive in Egypt, and all its products have won prizes at agricultural exhibitions.

COMMENTARY

The mourner speaks in the person first of the dead man's friend, then of his mother, and finally also of the dead man himself, without any clear transition. Only the dead youth's words are put between quotation marks. F 764

4. The dead youth was his mother's only surviving son. To give her some consolation the mourner expresses a wish, which cannot be realised, to see children on sale in the market. Adoption is in Egypt an institution copied from abroad. In Upper Egypt it is still unknown even among Christians. Moslem law forbids it. C F [567]

5. To the mother the boy's writing-materials are precious reminders of his youthful promise.

6. Here the mourner describes the mother's dismay at the news of her son's death. The shock is so great that she can no longer put her clothes on straight. C F [152]

7. By Upper Egyptian women Sundays and festivals are observed as days for commemoration of the dead. To show their grief they keep away from church, even for years at a time. At Christmas and Easter the churches are deserted. *On the other hand* a crowd of women come to disturb the quiet of the cemetery with their tears and shrieks. This Pagan custom is to some extent Christianised by the distribution of gifts to the poor (meat, cakes, etc.) for the repose of the souls of the dead. C F 794 765 769 735

9: Klunzinger D-5 (1863-1875) 1878
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

tion is made of her it is usually accompanied, as in the case of other unclean things, with a "saving your presence" (*essak Allah*, literally "God honour you"); with regard to inheritance she is regarded as only a half person; she is generally excluded from the mosque, and as a rule is not required to pray, or to know more than is necessary for housekeeping. Still, in the lands of Islam, as well as in the rest of the world, the weaker sex has subjected the stronger in certain fields. Here, too, there are plenty of men who are under petticoat government. The wife is significantly called *sitt*, that is, "mistress," and even the husband calls her so. The wife has even duties to perform towards the outer world in so far as she has to manage the housekeeping. When, in the absence of her husband a guest has to be entertained, meals are served up in the name of the wife through her servants or children, she inquires after the name and health of the guest, but she herself does not appear.

Her sphere of activity is entirely limited to the house, and she fulfils her mission with all the more contentment that the pleasures of the great world are unknown to her. She is not unsusceptible to the attractions of dress and finery—her sex makes this a matter of course—but she has only her husband and her female friends to shine before, and that sets a natural limit to her desires. Her longings do not go beyond her state of half freedom, to which she is accustomed from her youth up, seclusion is not regarded by her as a restraint imposed by the tyrannical men, but as a precept of morality, and a sudden edict of emancipation would at once arouse in the harem itself as much indignation and resistance as a tightening of the reins among the ladies of civilization. It is not to be denied that only in the garden of freedom can a healthy plant thrive, and come to maturity and produce fruit a thousand fold. The greenhouse plant never feels the storm, but it remains weakly and droops at the slightest breath of unaccustomed air that gains entrance from the outside by some crevice. Yet experience teaches that a goodly number of those open-air garden plants cannot stand their freedom, and perish if they do not receive strict attention and care.